

## Out by NKNovak

**Category:** IT (Movies - Muschietti)

**Genre:** Alternate Universe - High School, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, M/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Eddie Kaspbrak, Original Male Character - Max, Richie Tozier, The Losers Club (IT)

**Relationships:** Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Richie Tozier/Original Male Character

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2019-11-30

**Updated:** 2019-11-30

**Packaged:** 2019-12-19 02:11:59

**Rating:** Not Rated

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,343

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Richie travels from under the baseball field's bleachers to his best friend's porch.

# Out

## Author's Note:

So, we know from It: Chapter Two that Richie Tozier is out and that's about it. I wanted to write about how it happened. Although, I made a few changes. Rather than have Richie be 11 (like in the book) or 13 (like in the movie) I aged him up, he's 16, a junior in high school, as are Max, Eddie, and the rest of the losers club.

Richie winced looking at his bruised knuckles, they didn't hurt, or at least he didn't feel any pain, but they were a reminder of what he did minutes ago. He took a deep breath willing himself not to tear up, his knuckles may not have hurt but he was still in an immense amount of pain.

Since there was no baseball practice and no game today he thought he would be safe hiding under the bleachers, he realized how wrong he was when he heard footsteps coming toward him and saw a pair of red converse out of the corner of his eye, Max's favorite color. He didn't look up as Max knelt in front of him.

"Richie, I-"

"Don't" Richie cut him off, finally lifting his eyes to meet Max's, they were sad, regretful, they held an apology that Richie didn't want to hear. "You've said enough."

It had all happened so fast and only 30 minutes ago. The last bell had rung. Richie couldn't wait to get out of the school. He noticed the way people were looking at him and whispering, he didn't know what it was about, his friends didn't seem to know either, it bothered him a bit but not enough to do anything about it. That was until he came to his locker and saw on it photos printed out of him and Max in the Aladdin bathroom that was supposed to be empty at the time, holding hands, and kissing (maybe not the most romantic location but there weren't many places they could do it without people finding out they were gay). The picture was obviously of Richie, the

picture captured more than half of his face, including his most definable features: his curly hair, glasses, and a colorful shirt no other Derry teen in their right mind would wear. Max on the other had had a baseball cap on, a plain black shirt, his back was to whoever was holding the camera, no one could tell it was him. Along with the pictures were words scrawled on his locker in permanent marker: Gayboy, Homo, and Fairy, among others. Richie had torn them off his locker and threw the pictures in the trash when the wave of shock had passed. After he changed out his books he ignored everyone, including his friends, as he made a beeline for the exit. He hadn't planned to stop. Then he heard Max's voice. He was in the hall with his friends, he didn't notice Richie was passing him as he called him the f-word. It wasn't just what Max had called him that made him stop. It was the hatred and disgust in his voice. A wave of anger washed over Richie as he stopped, walked over to Max, and punched him as hard as he could.

"What the fuck, Tozier?" Max asked.

"Say it, Max!" Richie shouted at him.

"Say what? That you're fucking insane?!" Max looked confused.

"Call me a f\*g! Tell me I'm a disgusting fairy! Tell me you hate me!" Richie moved and step closer and said in a quieter voice, "tell me you don't love me." Max hesitating was all Richie needed to lean in and kiss Max. Max had said only a few days ago that he loved Richie, Richie had reciprocated but when Max pushed him away and said "I don't know what the fuck your talking about" Richie felt none of that love.

Now, Max was cradling Richie's cheek with his hand. "Richie, I only said what I said so no one would know"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah"

"I don't care" Richie pulled Max's hand down and away from his face. Maybe Richie was being unfair. He didn't mind keeping their relationship a secret when he wasn't out. Or maybe Max shouldn't

have said what he said. Either way, Richie could feel the love he had felt for Max slowly be replaced by pain. "You can tell everyone, all your friends whatever you want about you, me, or us. I'm done." Richie stood and left.

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Eddie was relaxing on his house's front porch swing, feeling the warm spring weather on his skin and breathing in the fresh air. His mother had him kept under lock and key all week thinking he was sick, the doctor told them it was just his hay fever acting up. Eddie still wasn't allowed to go to school or anywhere else until Monday but at least he convinced his mother to let him read outside since he wasn't sick!

While he was reading Richie appeared in front of his house, his eyes were red and puffy like he'd been crying.

"Rich?" Eddie asked, putting his book down.

Richie let his bike drop to the ground. "I don't know why I'm here," He said and walked to steps.

Eddie met him halfway, took his hand, noticing his bruised knuckles, and made Richie sit next to him on the porch swing, "what happened?"

"Max"

"Max?" There was only Max in their year so Eddie knew who Richie was referring to. Max was a star baseball player, he typically hung out with the other baseball players, he never paid much attention to losers club in any capacity so Eddie was confused as to what he could have done to Richie.

Richie hesitated. On one hand, he didn't want to see or hear Max's disgust replicated on Eddie's face. On the other hand, Eddie was going to find out everything on Monday anyway. Might as well rip the band-aid off, lose his boyfriend and best friend (along with the rest of his friends, the losers) all in one day. "Max and I are- no, we were dating"

Eddie didn't look disgusted, just surprised.

Richie didn't know what to say so he continued, "he was so sweet when we were alone, soft touches, gentle kisses. But-" Richie cut himself off, more tears fell down his face. He knew Eddie so well but he couldn't read what he was feeling right now, he just wanted to Eddie to something, anything, but he remained silent. Richie continued, "and the whole school knows about me, not Max, just me. So do the losers and now you" Richie stood ready to walk away, bike home, having lost everyone he cares about.

Instead, when Richie stood, Eddie pulled him back on the swing and hugged him.

"Eddie?"

"I'm not letting you bike home while you're crying. You'll end up not being able to see through your tears and crashing"

"Aww, Eds," Richie said, using his normal, playful tone of voice, "your so cute when you're worried about me," Richie spoke without thinking, as he often does, he used to always call Eddie cute but things were different now, weren't they?

"Don't call me Eds" Eddie grumbled.

Richie smiled. Things were different now but not with Eddie. Here, with Eddie, talking with him, it felt like a normal day, it felt right.

But then the rest of the losers club showed up. Richie frowned. The losers were his friends but he didn't know what to expect. His fight or flight instinct kicked in, telling him to run, get on his bike and leave. This time when he stood Eddie didn't stop him but stood with him.

"Hey, guys!" Eddie smiled, he walked to the edge of the porch.

"I told you guys Richie would be here," Stan said.

"You found me" Richie replied walking down the few porch steps. "But I was just leaving."

"Richie, wait" Beverly tried to stop him.

"Why? What do you want?" Richie grabbed his bike off the ground

but made no move to hop on.

“We are worried about you,” Bill said.

“Worried?” Richie asked.

“We just wanted to make sure after everything that happened in school that you didn’t jump to worst-case scenario and start thinking we hate you, want to kick you out of the losers club, or something ridiculous like that.”

*Yeah. . . Ridiculous Richie thought.*

*You're still a loser, Richie” Stan said.*

*Richie nodded, “and I always fucking will be.”*